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Cleaves, Margaret Abigail

Report of

Miss M.A. Cleaves...

Des Moines

1882

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REPORT
OF
MISS M. A. CLEAVES,
DELEGATE
TO THE
National Conference of Charities and Correction,
AND THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE INSANE
AND THE PREVENTION OF INSANITY,
HELD AT
CLEVELAND, OHIO,
JUNE AND JULY, 1880.

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1882.

REPORT.

To His Excellency John H. Gear, Governor of the State of Iowa:

DEAR SIR: I have the honor herewith to transmit to you my report, as State delegate to the recent meetings of "The National Conference of Charities and Correction," and "The National Association for the Protection of the Insane and the Prevention of Insanity;" both of which were held in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, June 29th and 30th, and July 1st and 2d, 1880.

A STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES.

The recommendation of the president of the conference, in his annual address, that a permanent statistical bureau should be established in every State, in order that the work may be more minutely and thoroughly done than the general census board does, seems to me a wise one. But it does not appear to be of so much importance in this State as the establishment of a State Board of Charities and Correction, which, from the very nature of its position and work, would be enabled to obtain this information intelligently and thoroughly; and which when in possession of it would be so situated as to consider and utilize it to the best possible advantage for the good of the State and her wards.

In the estimation of your delegate, there should be established, as speedily as possible, a State Board of Charities and Correction in Iowa, to whom should be intrusted all powers essential to the most efficient discharge of these important duties. Local Boards of Trustees, while familiar with the conditions and wants of their respective institutions, are illy calculated to advise intelligently even of the needs of the institution which they represent; because they have not that knowledge of the whole subject which will enable them to see the points of analogy and points of difference between

their own and other institutions, and thus render them capable of making judicious recommendations and giving intelligent advice. Each of such Boards represents to the legislature or legislative committees its interests and needs as seen from a local standpoint, and as of paramount importance to those of any other institution. A Board of State Charities, having under supervision all the charitable, penal, and reformatory institutions of the State, would from their knowledge of the whole field be enabled to say intelligently just what each one needed and what was necessary to be done for their best interests.

I quote, as follows, from the address of the president of the conference and wish to add thereto my most cordial approval of the statement. "It is absolutely impossible for any legislature or any legislative committee to give that time and attention which is indispensable to wise legislation in regard to our public institutions, without the cooperation of a permanent Board of State Charities and Correction."

In order, therefore, that our legislative bodies may be advised intelligently concerning the needs of our dependent and criminal classes, and the best methods for their care, detention, and treatment, there is needed that "animating intelligence which comes from organized and systematic efforts by competent and informed persons." The additional expense, necessary to the establishment and support of such an organization, would eventually, in the estimation of your delegate, be more than met by the amount saved to the State through the wiser economy which would govern the expenditures for the support of our dependent and delinquent classes, as well as in the better methods of care and treatment which would obtain, and the better results consequent upon systematic and organized effort. Nine States have such boards at this time, viz, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Kansas. While they are all working to the same general end, they are organized upon different plans, and I doubt if the organization of the board of any one State would in all respects be adapted to the wants of another. In Iowa, such a board must be organized upon a plan which will meet the wants of the State. It should have supervision over all the charitable, penal, and reformatory institutions of the State, as well as all the dependents and de-

linquents within its borders, whether in jails, poor-houses, or private houses. All of these classes should be regarded as wards of the State and should be under her immediate supervision. The duties to be imposed upon these boards and the powers to be exercised by them are, as yet, an open question and must to a great extent be settled by the individual States themselves.

1st. One point, upon which experienced workers are agreed, is in regard to our penal system. We cannot but regard it as a relic of barbarism; and fully realize that it needs reconstruction from top to bottom. Prisons throughout the United States, with perhaps but half a dozen exceptions, are merely places for punishment; and, as a rule, they make men worse instead of better. Jails and station-houses are even worse, perhaps, than prisons, and, instead of preventing or correcting crime, act as a continuing cause for it; the matter of jails and prisons is one that requires not only the attention of our philanthropists, but of the people as well. The aim of the State should not be punishment, only, for the criminal, and protection for the people; but reform for every individual capable of reformation. Every criminal reformed, no less every insane person cured, will, in the end, be a gain to the State and humanity. Prisoners should not be herded together. Convicted offenders should not be confined with the unconvicted, and old offenders should have no association with the young. Such laws should be enacted as would bring about this result; and, in the construction of new jails, provision should be made for the entire and absolute separation of all prisoners when deemed desirable. Under the present system all are herded together indiscriminately. The hardened offenders, with those guilty of their first criminal act; the depraved and vicious, with those who are simply weak and unfortunate; the old with the young; the guilty with the innocent; all are associated together, and every opportunity is offered for the moral corruption of all.

2d. The proper classification of those in jails is essential to their reclamation and future usefulness. All persons convicted of less than penitentiary offenses should be sent to work-houses, and compelled to earn their keeping by hard labor. All tramps, vagrants, and able-bodied paupers should be ranked as minor offenders, and promptly sent to the workhouse. In this State, where we have no large cities,

the system of district work-houses would be suitable. It was the pleasure of your delegate to visit a work-house in the city of Cleveland, which by the labor of its inmates is rendered not only self-sustaining, but affords some revenue to the city. The industry maintained therein is the manufacture of brushes. If this class were by law compelled to earn their living by hard labor in district work-houses, instead of being furnished with boarding free of charge, as at present, their numbers would be diminished by causing them to acquire and practice habits of industry, and in the end a great saving to the State would be effected. It seems, to your delegate, that it was said with great pertinence, concerning penitentiaries, that they discharge prisoners worse in character and more dangerous to society than when they received them. Such a state of affairs is wrong and should not be continued.

3d. We should remember that men inside of prison walls, like men outside, are intensely human. None are wholly bad, and none are wholly good. In short, we should remember that condemned criminals are men of like passions with ourselves, and that fair, just, and equitable treatment is appreciated inside of prison walls just as fully as it is outside, and with the same result in making men better or worse. It is justice and not mercy that insists that a convict is fairly entitled to treatment according to conduct.

4th. All prisoners able to work should receive steady employment in occupations furnished by the State, rather than by contractors, and if unable to read and write they should be taught that much at least in a prison school.

5th. Prisoners, when discharged, should receive a certificate of good conduct if entitled to it, together with a percentage of their earnings, to give them a start. If their conduct has been bad, they should be carefully registered, and placed under supervision of the police, and be required to report at stated periods their location and occupation. To place the brand of Cain upon all alike—the good as well as the bad, is not only the height of cruelty, but also the height of folly.

6th. Our penitentiaries, to be what they ought to be, must have intelligent supervision, and all their officials should be specially trained for their work.

PREVENTION OF CRIME.

One other point upon which the conference and all experienced workers feel that too much stress cannot be laid, is the importance of prevention rather than cure.

By looking after the vagrant, homeless, vicious children, we may hope to accomplish the greatest good. A much larger percent, if taken when children and placed in industrial schools with proper training, may be saved from becoming criminals, than could possibly be reformed after entering upon a life of crime. No sin can be greater than that of allowing children to drift through our communities as homeless waifs, or to thrust them into poor-houses to be contaminated by their often vile and immoral surroundings. The law upon that point should be *must* and not "may;" and I trust that Iowa will look to it with an earnestness and speed that every child within her borders is removed from her poor-houses and placed in proper institutions for their care or in private homes. It is an extremely short-sighted policy to keep children in poor-houses because of the dollars and cents saved thereby. Instead of refining and elevating, such a home tends to deprave and demoralize and fit them for a life of dependence and crime.

PRIVATE HOMES FOR CHILDREN.

Nor is it the best policy to keep children continually in institutions for that purpose. The effects of institution life are, it seems to me, hurtful in the extreme for the individual. The policy should be to find suitable homes for all dependent children, from time to time, where they will have proper training and the beneficial influences of home life. If New York is able in one part to find homes in Iowa for more than one hundred of her homeless children, I fail to see why Iowa herself cannot provide similar homes within her own borders for her own destitute children who are scattered throughout the poor-houses or are kept in institutions at the State expense. Certainly, in this case, charity should begin at home, and the first duty of the State should be to place her own destitute children in the childless homes of the State. Then, if there is room, let her doors be opened to the children abroad. For those who have to be kept in institutions, whether in the Orphans'

Home or in our Reform Schools, the home life should be approximated as nearly as possible and the inmates should be taught all domestic occupations as well as such industrial pursuits as can be taught therein. The care of the neglected and dependent children is the most important of all the questions submitted to the consideration of the philanthropist. "If society should do its duty in this regard, it would not sleep until every one of its homeless and neglected children was taken out of the pollutions of poor-houses and out of the cities, and placed under the fostering care and in the genial sunshine of a Christian home." And more than this I would say that we should not rest until a home is found for every child that is a ward of the State.

THE INSANE.

Ere taking up for consideration the special subject of insanity and the insane, your delegate deems it wise to embody in this report the following propositions which were submitted to the conference, by the president in his address, and which are so pertinent as to demand expression and indorsement herein.

1st. The insane, the epileptic, and the idiotic should be wholly under State care, and not one of them should be left in a county or city poor-house.

2d. The insane should be so classified and subdivided that the ordinary insane, the epileptic insane, and the convict insane should be entirely separated, and in the larger States each class should be provided for in an institution of its own.

3d. The idiotic and imbecile should be provided for not only in educational, but also in custodial, institutions under one administration. If we are to control the increase of idiocy custodial care is indispensable.

4th. Almshouses should be strictly limited to the care of such as are entirely unable to earn a living for themselves. Able bodied paupers should be sent to the work-house. The almshouse should be a refuge for the old, the sick, the lame, the halt, and the blind who have no other shelter, and to the worthy it should be made cheerful, comfortable, and hospitable.

Hospitals for the insane have been made to accommodate too many patients and built with an eye to the use of future generations

rather than the present, and not to individual wants and needs, nor with any idea of approximating the home life. Many insane persons do not need any stronger or more enduring home than the average sane citizen.

That sane people are influenced by their surroundings is too self-evident a proposition to need demonstration. Insane nature does not differ materially from sane nature, only that a person weak, nervous, the subject of depression or excitement, as the case may be, with the balance not quite perfect, will be more readily affected by disturbing influences than the healthy, well balanced mind. In order that our hospitals should be such in the highest and best sense of the word, they should contain none but curable cases and they should have the supervision, care, and treatment of the best medical skill obtainable. They should be relieved of their prison-like features, and provided with all modern appliances for the treatment of disease. The policy of the State should be to remove the incurables from the hospitals to an asylum where they would still be under medical supervision. In this State we have two hospitals which have been constructed at great expense and are very well equipped for hospital purposes. Under these circumstances, it would not be wise, perhaps, to convert them into asylums for the incurable insane, although, in the opinion of your delegate, it would in the end be the better economy. Hospitals for curable cases ought not to contain more than a hundred patients in order that they may receive both the proper medical and personal attention. Fifty is a sufficiently large number to be under the care of any one physician. The hospitals which we have, however, are of greater capacity, and it only remains to make the best of them. The best policy for this State, it seems to your delegate, is to keep our present hospital buildings for hospital use alone. They are made at present to accommodate a number greatly in excess of their capacity. This should not be. If devoted to curative purposes two hundred will be a sufficient number for Mt. Pleasant and three hundred for Independence. If the incurable cases were removed from the hospitals there would not need to be more than the above estimate present at any one time. The incurables should be provided for not in the poor-houses, jails, or even in county asylums connected with poor-houses,

but rather in district asylums or in a central State asylum. Under the circumstances, the best plan, perhaps, would be to secure a large farm centrally located, well watered and timbered, near a good market, and erect thereon a central or administrative building and detached buildings to accommodate the present number of the incurables, none of which structures should have a capacity to exceed one hundred and preferably a smaller number, at a cost in accord with the spirit not only of modern economy, but with the best interests of the chronic insane as well. They should not cost more than from two hundred and fifty to four hundred dollars per capita for shelter. Provision need not necessarily be made for all the incurable insane at once, as the expense would necessarily be great; but the policy should be to provide for the erection of these detached buildings from time to time as they are needed, or as the State can incur the expense.

Especially for the incurable, employment in the open air, when practicable, with a good, generous diet, will do more good than all the drugs in materia medica. It is a fact, well known to all, that enforced idleness is the worst calamity which can befall a human being. It is just as true of the insane as of the sane. The unoccupied mind has naught to do but to turn inward and feed upon itself. Morbid fancies are brooded upon until they become fixed. Delusions are indulged in by silent, contemplative introspection, until they in turn are fixed. Violent, destructive, and uncontrollable conduct has every opportunity to display itself, when the individual is unoccupied and left to follow his own sweet will.

Discontent would be less rife; and faces, now almost devoid of intelligence, would, under the happy influences of employment, fresh air, and sunshine, brighten materially. These views are not, as they may seem at first thought, utopian. The experiment of labor and a greater degree of freedom has been tried with marked success.

The reason why the non-restraint system succeeds in Great Britain, and on the continent, is because the insane are given work to do. Of much greater effect than either mechanical, manual, or medicinal restraint is the indirect restraining power of occupation.

A greater degree of liberty could and should be allowed insane persons than now obtained. Deprivation of liberty, while necessary in many instances, is not necessary in all; and the seclusion and re-

straint of a hospital, while wise for one, may be most unwise for another.

Our commissioners of insanity should be a body of *medical* persons, and should exercise discretionary powers in regard to the commitment of those brought before them.

While it is necessary to remove many from their homes and familiar surroundings, many others should never be sent to hospitals; but should be treated at their own homes, or in some instances, where change of scene is demanded, in private homes elsewhere.

The business management of the institutions should be placed in the hands of a third party, a steward. The physician should not have to spend time, which ought to be devoted to the medical care of the patients, to the work of an *architect, civil engineer, farmer, steward*, or the like. All such duties should be entirely removed from their hands. They should not, in hospitals for curable cases, have so many patients but that they can see each one of them every day, and have time to examine each case thoroughly as is done by physicians in private practice.

A hasty salutation should be replaced by a minute and intelligent examination of every organ and function. The difficulties besetting physicians to the insane are greater than those of the physician in ordinary practice; and presumably more time should be given by the former to their patients than by the latter.

These things can and must be, if we hope to escape in any degree, the Scylla and Charybdis which beset the road to success.

Physicians in charge of the insane, as well as the general practitioner, should do all they can toward the prevention of mental disease by teaching the public the laws of health and the danger of trespassing upon them.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

During the session of the conference there was organized a "National Association for the Protection of the Insane and the Prevention of Insanity." Your delegate attended the meeting as representative from Iowa, in accordance with the commission received from your excellency.

The National Association numbers among its officers and mem-

bers some of the best known physicians and philanthropists throughout the country.

The following are stated to be the Society's methods for attaining the end expressed in its name.

"1st. By the encouragement of special and thorough clinical and pathological observations by the medical profession generally, as well as those connected with asylums.

"2d. By enlightening public sentiment as to the nature of the malady, importance of early treatment, and improved methods of treatment at home and abroad.

"3d. By recommending an enlightened State policy, which, while neglecting no one of its insane population, shall so administer relief and protection as not to lay unnecessary or undue burdens upon the tax-payers.

"4th. By holding public meetings, wherever needed, to stimulate legislation that will secure efficient State supervision of all public institutions for the care of the insane, as a mutual safeguard for the protection of society—the patients, as well as those who have them in charge.

"5th. To further the perfection of laws relating to the treatment of the insane, and their rights while patients in the asylum.

"6th. By efforts to allay the public distrust in relation to the management of insane asylums, by placing them on the same footing as that of other hospitals, both in the matter of freer communication with the outside world, and the privilege of a consulting medical staff of general practitioners."

Your delegate is in thorough sympathy and accord with the object of this Association, and believes it is destined to be a great power for good in the United States, in preventing insanity, by its influence as an educative body, and in securing more rational and consequently more efficient care and treatment for the insane.

The Association adjourned to meet the last week in September, 1880, in the city of New York, for the purpose of perfecting their organization and entering upon their work.

The Conference adjourned to meet the last Monday of July, 1881, in the city of Boston.

Respectfully submitted,

M. A. CLEAVES.

Davenport, Iowa, August 10th, 1880.

END OF
TITLE